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CLAIM AMENDMENT

1. (currently amended) A method for charging in a data communications network, the network comprising a User, a Service Provider that provides at least one service, and an Accounting Manager, the method comprising the steps of:

- receiving from the User a service credential request in the Accounting Manager, the service credential being received via the data communications network;
- in response to the service credential request, sending by the Accounting Manager a service credential to the User via the data communications network;
- in response to the service credential request, sending by the Accounting Manager a user credential to the Service Provider via the data communications network;
- receiving from the User a service request at the Service Provider, the service request being based on information sent in the service credential;
- ~~validating by the Service Provider the service request using information from the user credential;~~
- initiating the service; ~~and~~
- receiving from the Service Provider an accounting message relating to the service in the Accounting Manager; and
- wherein there exist a first electronic security association between the User and the Accounting Manager and a second electronic security association between the Service Provider and the Accounting Manager.

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2. (original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising, prior to the step of sending by the Service Provider an accounting message relating to the service to the Accounting Manager, the step of terminating the service.
3. (original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the accounting message is a Final accounting message, and the method further comprises, prior to the step of terminating the service, the step of sending by the Service Provider at least one Interim accounting message relating to the service to the Accounting Manager.
4. (original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the network further comprises an Accounting Storage, and the method further comprises, after the step of sending by the Service Provider an accounting message relating to the service to the Accounting Manager, the step of sending from the Accounting Manager to the Accounting Storage a Record Accounting message comprising accounting data.
5. (original) The method according to claim 4, further comprising the steps of:
 - storing by the Accounting Storage the accounting data from the Record Accounting message;
 - sending by the Accounting Storage an Acknowledgement to the Accounting Manager; and
 - upon reception of the Acknowledgement, deleting by the Accounting Manager the accounting data it sent to the Accounting Storage in the Record Accounting message.

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6. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:, ~~prior to~~
- ~~in response to the step of sending by the Accounting Manager a service credential to the User, the steps of:~~ receiving from the User a service credential request ~~related in the Accounting Manager,~~ ; and validating by the Accounting Manager the service credential request~~;~~ and
 - in response to the step of receiving from the User a service request at the Service Provider, validating by the Service Provider the service request using information from the user credential.
7. (original) The method according to claim 6, wherein the service credential request comprises:
- an indication of a requested service;
 - a unique request identifier;
 - a random number; and
 - an electronic signature.
8. (original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the service credential comprises:
- the unique request identifier;
 - an address of the Service Provider;
 - an electronic key;
 - an accounting session identifier; and
 - an electronic signature.
9. (original) The method according to claim 8, wherein the service credential further comprises:
- a validity period for the service credential.

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10. (original) The method according to claim 8, wherein the service credential further comprises:
 - at least one condition for use of the credential.
11. (original) The method according to claim 8, wherein the user credential comprises:
 - an address of the User;
 - the accounting session identifier;
 - an electronic key; and
 - an electronic signature.
12. (original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the user credential further comprises policies regarding service access and accounting.
13. (original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the step of requesting by the User a service from the Service Provider further comprises sending from the User a service request to the Service Provider, wherein the service request comprises:
 - the address of the user;
 - the accounting session identifier; and
 - an electronic signature.



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14. (original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the accounting message comprises:
- an identifier of the service;
 - an indicator that the message comprises accounting data;
 - the user credential;
 - a unique accounting message identifier;
 - an accounting session identifier;
 - accounting data; and
 - an electronic signature.
15. - 32 (cancelled)
33. (currently amended) An Accounting Manager in a data communications network that further comprises a User and a Service Provider, the Accounting Manager comprising:
- a communication unit that:
 - receives a service credential request from the User via the data communications network;
 - sends a service credential to the User via the data communications network;
 - sends a user credential to the Service Provider via the data communications network; and
 - receives an accounting message from the Service Provider via the data communications network; and
 - wherein there exist a first electronic security association between the User and the Accounting Manager and a second electronic security association between the Service Provider and the Accounting Manager.

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34. (original) The Accounting Manager according to claim 33, wherein the accounting message is a Final accounting message and the communication unit further receives at least one Interim accounting message from the Service Provider.
35. (original) The Accounting Manager according to claim 33, wherein the data communications network further comprises an Accounting Storage, and the communication unit further sends a Record Accounting message comprising accounting data to the Accounting Storage.
36. (original) The Accounting Manager according to claim 35, wherein the communication unit further receives an Acknowledgement from the Accounting Storage, and the Accounting Manager further comprises a processing unit that, upon reception of the Acknowledgement, deletes the accounting data it sent to the Accounting Storage in the Record Accounting message.
37. (previously amended) The Accounting Manager of claim 33 further comprising a processing unit that validates the service credential request prior to sending the service credential to the User
38. - 41. (cancelled)

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42. (currently amended) A system for charging in a data communications network further comprising a User, the system comprising:
- an Accounting Manager that:
 - receives a service credential request from the User via the data communications network;
 - sends a service credential to the User via the data communications network; and
 - sends a user credential to the Service Provider via the data communications network; and
 - a Service Provider that provides at least one service and that:
 - receives a service request from the User, the service request being based on information sent the service credential;
 - validates the service request, using information from the user credential; and
 - sends an accounting message relating to the service to the Accounting Manager
 - wherein there exist a first electronic security association between the User and the Accounting Manager and a second electronic security association between the Service Provider and the Accounting Manager.
43. (original) The system according to claim 42, wherein the accounting message is a Final accounting message, and wherein the Service Provider further sends at least one Interim accounting message relating to the service to the Accounting Manager.
44. (original) The system according to claim 42; wherein the system further comprises an Accounting Storage,

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and the Accounting Manager further sends a Record Accounting message comprising accounting data to the Accounting Storage.

45. (original) The system according to claim 44, wherein:

- the Accounting Storage:
 - stores the accounting data from the Record Accounting message; and
 - sends an Acknowledgement to the Accounting Manager; and
- the Accounting Manager further deletes the accounting data it sent to the Accounting Storage in the Record Accounting message upon reception of the Acknowledgement.

46. (previously amended) The system according to claim 42, wherein the Accounting Manager further:

- validates the service credential request prior to sending the service credential to the User.

47. (original) The system according to claim 46, wherein the service credential request comprises:

- an indication of a requested service;
- a unique request identifier;
- a random number; and
- an electronic signature.



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48. (original) The system according to claim 47, wherein the service credential comprises:
- the unique request identifier;
 - an address of the Service Provider;
 - an accounting session identifier;
 - an electronic key; and
 - an electronic signature.
49. (original) The system according to claim 48, wherein the service credential further comprises:
- a validity period for the service credential.
50. (original) The system according to claim 48, wherein the service credential further comprises:
- at least one condition for use of the credential.
51. (original) The system according to claim 48, wherein the user credential comprises:
- an address of the User;
 - an accounting identifier;
 - an electronic key;
 - the accounting session identifier; and
 - an electronic signature.
52. (original) The system according to claim 51, wherein the user credential further comprises policies regarding service access and accounting.

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53. (original) The system according to claim 51, wherein the request for a service is a service request comprising:
- the address of the user;
 - the accounting session identifier; and
 - an electronic signature.
54. (original) The system according to claim 42, wherein the accounting message comprises:
- an identifier of the service;
 - an indicator that the message comprises accounting data;
 - the user credential;
 - a unique message identifier;
 - accounting data; and
 - an electronic signature.
55. (original) The system according to claim 42, wherein the Account Manager further initiates the requested service.